

## Merton at McDonald's

By **Robert E. Doud**

How many medium decaf McCafes,  
 I downed here with an a.m. Egg McMuffin,  
 In the executive McD's on banky Central Avenue?  
 Not yet ready for my Final Integration,  
 Something in my brain deeply dances  
 To a music my empirical ears don't hear.  
 My sensual eyes do not see  
 The self I am in the mirrors on the walls.  
 I touch my plastic fork and spoon,  
 But not the part of me that awakens  
 Unexpectedly, and is not fed by them.  
 All these senses pause in abeyance  
 As an inner eye opens up and sees  
 A secret Palace of Nowhere!  
 Briefly and sippingly, but briefly is enough  
 To taste the dance and savor the palace.  
 Cozy with hands, around a hot cup  
 On a cold day outside, but clear,  
 McDonald's becomes a monastery,  
 Replete with barns for cows and pigs,  
 Curious novices, distracted contemplatives,  
 Well-toned chanters, theologians,  
 Monks meditating on psalms,  
 Priests with pastoral concerns,  
 Abbots and priors worried seraphically  
 About balancing books and promoting piety.  
 A rare silence seizes the restaurant,  
 For a moment, a room full of true selves  
 Buds forth in quickest fission,  
 An eternal springtime in January  
 Tasted just for now like sugar crystals  
 That melt instantaneously, sweetly,  
 Into grace-blackened coffee, into  
 Gethsemanis full of mystical ears.



**Robert E. Doud**

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**Robert E. Doud** is emeritus professor of philosophy and religious studies at Pasadena City College, Pasadena, CA, with a focus on the intersection of philosophy and poetry. His articles have appeared in *Process Studies*, *Review for Religious*, *The Journal of Religion*, *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Philosophy Today*, *The Thomist*, *Thought*, *Religion & Literature*, *Horizons*, *Soundings* and *The Way*. His poetry has appeared in *The Writer*, *Prism*, *Mount Voices*, *Process Perspectives*, *La Vernacula* and *The Wallace Stevens Journal*.